PETITION.

To His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir Frederick Temple, Earl of Dufferin, K. P., K. C. B., P. C. Governor General of Canada, &c., &c., &c , in Council.

The Petition of the St. Catharines Board of Trade, humbly sheweth :

1. That severe and calamitous depression has existed for a very considerable space of time, among many important Manufacturing industries in this Dominion, whereby a very large amount of capital has been rendered unproductive, and, even destroyed, and thousands of operatives deprived of the means of earning their daily bread :

2. That this unfortunate state of affairs demands serious attention, and the adoption of the most effectual measures possible, to bring about its early cessation, and the advent of prosperity :

3. That the Board entertains the firm conviction derived from the personal experience and knowledge of its own members, and the representations of large numbers of Manufacturers and Merchants, throughout the country at large, that the common practice adopted by American Manufacturers of selling their surplus stocks of goods in Canada, at rates with which it is impossible for Canadian Manufacturers to compete, without loss, is an essential and important factor of this depression :

4. On account of the neutralizing effect of the discount on American Currency, the Customs duty of seventeen and one half per cent., constitutes no defence against this practice of American Manufacturers, who continue to carry it on with impunity, whilst at the same time the prohibitory American duties on foreign manufactures effectually debar Canadian manufacturers from all access to the American market. For this unequal and unfair condition of affairs, there can be no justification, and it should be promptly terminated by a sufficient rectification of the Canadian tariff :

5. While the Board prays for a re-adjustment of the Canadian tariff on the ground before mentioned, it goes farther, and suggests that additional weight is given to its prayer by the comparative results of the present policies of the Dominion of Canada and the United States, upon the Manufacturing Industries of the two countries. The limited variety, the dwarfed and shrivelled proportions of the former, glaringly contrast with the colossal developement and vast variety of the latter ; while on the other hand, Canada enjoys no superior development nor prosperity of her Agricultural Industries over her neighbor, as an offset. As British North America and the United States started in their career at the same time, and as the natural advantages of both portions of the Continent are much the same, and practically unlimited, the explanation of the above discrepancy, must be sought in the public policy of the two countries :

6. That the continuous growth and development of Canada, will be best and most certainly promoted by such a policy as will conduce to the establishment and successful operation of the greatest diversity of industries, which the natural advantages and peculiarities of the country will admit. Had the past policy of of Canada been of this character, it could by no possibility have been necessary for 493,000 native born Canadians to leave their country and domicile in the United States to find employment, as shown by the United States census for 1870, nor (placing the value of each emigrant at the reputed sum of $1,000,) would Canada have lost $493,000,000, and the United States gained an equal amount by this enormous exodus of Canadians.

7. That whilst the requirements of different industries for assistance from protective tariffs vary from absolute exemption (in a very few cases) upwards, twenty-five per cent. ad-valorem, or a corresponding amount of specified duty will give effectual aid to those industries like the cotton, sugar-refining and hardware industries, that now are suffering so severely.

8. That to combine and cement the several Provinces of this Dominion, into one strong, prosperous and progressive whole, and at the same time secure an adequate return for the large expenditure made, and to be made upon Canadian land and water highways, it is important that the greatest possible encouragement should be given to the mutual interchange of products between the Inland and Maritime Provinces.

9 The existing adjustment of the tariff tends to hinder rather than to promote this object.

10. A sufficient duty on foreign manufactures and products, including American Bituminous coal and flour, will bring about a profitable and extensive inter-provincial trade, especially by providing freight each way for steamers and sailing vessels engaged in it, and when once this mutual inter-change of products shall be fairly established, the enormous advantage to be derived from freight each way between the Inland and Maritime Provinces, will cheapen charges of transportation sufficiently to offset the customs duties. The experience of the Eastern and Western States of the Union, corroberates this statement :

11. And as the advantages accrued to the trans-atlantic trade of Canada, by the establishment of the Montreal ocean steamship line have well re-paid the country, for the heavy subsidies of public money granted for its assistance, so will liberal assistance given to promote the interchange of products between the Inland and Maritime Provinces by subsidies of money to shipping engaged in this traffic by specially favorable rates on the Intercolonial and Grand Trunk Railways, and a suitable adjustment of custom duties, leading to the same end, produce similarly satisfactory results to this country.

12. That the so called over production of such Canadian Manufactures, as iron, cotton and woollen goods, is grossly exaggerated as an assigned cause of the past and present stagnation. The facts are that the shelves and ware-houses of our merchants are loaded and filled with foreign (including British) goods purchased at sacrificial rates, to the exclusion of home productions. A sufficient increase of the duties on such goods (say twenty-five per cent) will, as the foreign supply gradually moves off, set Canadian mills and factories in prosperous motion to replace it, to the manifest advantage of all classes of the people.

For the foregoing and other good reasons, your Petitioners humbly pray, that the Customs duties on such importations of foreign manufactures and products as injuriously compete with Canadian ones, may be raised to such an extent, say twenty-five per cent., as will correct the evils complained of, and promote trade between the Inland and Maritime Provinces in a proper degree.

And as in duty bound, your Petitioners will ever pray.

Jas. G. Edwards
Secretary.

Lewis S. Wilkes
President